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23

A
S E R M O N

sermons on several Subjects and Occasions;
which were delivered at the
Funeral of the late

F U N E R A L

Of the Reverend

Mr. DAVID REES.

(Price Sixpence.)

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under all Afflictions, and at a dying Hour.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED

At Limehouse, June 2, 1748.

AT THE
F U N E R A L

Of the Reverend

Mr. *DAVID REES*,

Who departed this LIFE, May 26,

In the *Sixty-fourth* Year of his Age.

By JOSEPH STENNETT.

Published at the Request of the Congregation.

L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN WARD, in *Little-Britain*;
and JOHN OSWALD, in the POULTRY.

MDCCXLVIII.

W. Augustus

A

SERMON

PREACHED

At Liverpool, June 2, 1748.

AT THE

FUNERAL

Of the Reverend

MR. DAVID REES



Who departed this life, May 26,

In the sixty-fourth Year of his Age.

By JOSEPH STENNETT.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for John Ward, in King's-Bench-Street, and John O'ward, in the Poplar.

MDCCLXVIII.

2 SAMUEL xxiii. 2.

*Although my house be not so with God;
yet he hath made with me an ever-
lasting covenant, ordered in all things,
and sure: for this is all my salvation,
and all my desire, although he make
it not to grow.*

IAM satisfied it will be sufficient to engage your most serious and affectionate attention, when I tell you, that these were some of the last words of that reverend and excellent person, who, by the divine appointment, has for many years, with so much faithfulness and love, *watch'd over you in the Lord*; whose spiritual ministrations many of you have, so often, attended with delight and improvement; but whose precious dust we are now going to commit to the grave, and whose instructive voice you shall hear no more for ever. They are the words which, but a few days before his death, he left me in charge, as containing the subject, with which I should improve the solemnities of his funeral among you;—words well chosen indeed, as they most suitably express both the trial, and the steadfast-

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ness

2 A SERMON at the Funeral

ness of his own faith, under a long series of most uncommon afflictions, the sentiments of his mind on the borders of the eternal world, and the last, and best advice and consolation he was capable of administering to you at his departure.

THEY were it seems some of *the last words of David*^a, or however some of the last which he spake under divine inspiration, after he had given his dying charge to his son *Solomon*^b; after he had put up a most affectionate prayer for him and his posterity, and the church of God^c; and after he had sung a song of praise to heaven, for the various goodness which had followed him, thro' the whole course of his life and government; both which he was now about to resign. So the patriarch *Jacob* finished his course^d; so *Moses*, the great lawgiver of *Israel*, closed up his commission^e; and, in this manner, a greater than either of them, the Mediator of the new covenant, when he was about to give his life a ransom for our souls, concluded his ministry here below.

THE sacred historian, agreeable to the nature of the occasion, and in order to awaken a general attention, introduces the words with the character of him that spake them;—*David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said*^f—. Thus the

^a 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

^b 1 Kings ii.

^c Psal. lxxii.

^d Gen. xlviii, xlix.

^e Deut. xxxii, xxxiii.

^f v. 1.

low and obscure extraction of this great man is recorded, and the special hand of God acknowledged, which exalted him to the regal dignity; the hand by which he was, in so remarkable a manner, taken from the sheepfold, and seated on the most eminent throne in the whole world. And to this elevation he has the additional honour given to his character, on this occasion, that he was *the sweet psalmist of Israel*: importing, that he was the most eminent inspired poet of his time; who had composed many a divine song for the public service of the church, had set those songs to the music of the sanctuary, and with his melodious harp and voice had often led the sacred harmony. These were, it seems, *the last words* of this extraordinary person, when he was just about to quit these his delightful services below, in order to bear a part in the music of the upper world.

THEN follows an account of what he *said* upon this important occasion.—*The spirit of the LORD spake by me, or thro' me*, as some of the ancient versions render it, and his word was *in or upon my tongue*. *The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me*. Thus, as an evidence of the truth of his inspiration, he avows that, in the article of death, which was, long afterwards, attested concerning him by the same spirit in the new testament^h. Some interpreters think *David* has a particular reference

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here

על לשונו נִסְּחָה לִּי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל LXXII.

^h Acts iv. 25. 2 Pet. i. 25.

4 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

here to each of the persons in the Sacred Trinity, and that, as *the Spirit of God* spake by him, so by *the God of Israel* the Father is more especially intended, and by *the rock of Israel*, the Son, who is elsewhere called the *rock of ages*^h, *the tried stone, that is laid in Sion for a foundation*ⁱ, and the *rock* of which the children of *Israel* drank in the wilderness^k. However this be, as *David* often ascribes the character of a *rock*^l to God, to represent the security of his own confidence in his protection, during the whole course of his life; so it was very proper, at such a time as this, when he would express the reasonableness and the firmness of his faith in the article of death, and recommend the same blessed foundation of hope and trust to those who should survive.

THE variation of the phrase is remarkable,—*The Spirit of the Lord* spake by me, says he, and *the Rock of Israel* spake to me. The same God who spake by him to others, spake also to himself, and that, in a special manner, at this extraordinary season.

AND what was it *the God of Israel* said?—*He that ruleth over men* must be just, ruling in the fear of God^m. A short but admirable representation of the two great principles on which both the interest and duty of the greatest potentates upon earth, as well as the meanest of their subjects, are founded; namely, the substance

^h Isa. xxxi. 9.

ⁱ ch. xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

^k 1 Cor. x. 4.

^l Psal. xxviii. 1. & lxii. 2.

^m v. 3.

substance of the two tables of the moral law, justice towards men, and piety towards God. The civil polity of the *Jews* was evidently regulated on these principles. Thus their great lawgiver taught, and thus he govern'd. And it was a strict adherence to these rules, that rais'd the authority of *Samuel* to such a height, and that furnish'd him with so universal, and so uncommon a testimony from the whole nation, at the time when he resign'd the governmentⁿ: It was because he ruled justly, and without oppression. And himself declares both to the prince that was to succeed him, and to the people over whom he was to preside, that the true path to all public, political, and social happiness, as well as to that of a more private and personal kind, lay in the exercise of justice, truth, and the fear of the Lord^o. And it was from these principles, and in this spirit that *Nehemiah* became an instrument of raising the honour and prosperity of his country, in so short a time, when it had been so long sunk into the deepest misery, and that his own name was so justly embalmed by posterity: It was by avoiding the oppressive measures of former governors, and carefully distributing justice and mercy among the people; and all this from the principles of true religion, or, as himself expresses it, *because of the fear of God* P.

So

ⁿ 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4. ^o v. 24, 25. P Neh. v. 15.

6 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

So the man after God's own heart govern'd, and so he advises his successors to do. And to enforce his dying counsel, he illustrates this exalted character of a good prince by a most elegant similitude, and indeed gives it us finish'd with all the divine advantages of clemency and benevolence.—He shall be *as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain*^a. “He shall bless the world at his entrance on his government, like the chearing beams of an unclouded sun in the morning, and the happy effects of it on his subjects shall be, like the springing of the tender grass, under the influence of its rays, after a gentle shower.”

THUS did this wise and great king, after long experience, and under the inspiration of God himself, recommend such an exercise of authority as is founded on religious principles, and directed to the true ends of its institution. Happy for those few among the *sons of the mighty* who have received the instruction, and have learned to govern by such maxims as these! And thrice happy must those nations be, who are bless'd with such princes! However this disposition be but rarely found among the rulers of this world, yet we know it is a just character of the spiritual government of the *Messiah*, in whose kingdom that of *David* terminates; whom God hath anointed, and *set upon his holy hill of Sion*; and concerning whom
many

^a Neh. v. 4.

many of the ancient *Jews* understood this context as a prophecy; and thus the *Chaldee* paraphrase expressly explains it. This *sun of righteousness* has indeed *arisen*, and visited mankind *with healing in his wings* ^r, and the day-spring from on high has given light to them that sat in darkness, and the shadow of death, to guide their feet in the way of peace ^s. And as *David* and other prophets express it, the going forth of the Redeemer was prepared as the morning, and his coming as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth ^t, when from the womb of the morning, he had the dew of his youth ^u, and the branch of the LORD became beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth was excellent and comely ^x.

BUT then follow the words of our text. *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. Wherein,*

I. WE have *David's* complaint, and,

II. THE matter of his support and comfort.

I. WE have his complaint; that his *house* was *not so with God*, and he *made it not to grow*. And,

I. SOME

^r Mal. iv. 2. ^s Luke i. 78. ^t Hos. vi. 3. ^u Pf. cx. 3.

^x Isai. iv. 2.

8 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

I. SOME think by *David's house* he means his kingdom and government. And that after having represented the equitable and benevolent reign of a good prince in all its glory and usefulness, he humbly acknowledges the many defects and blemishes of his own.

FOR tho' in the execution of that high office, to which *David* was so remarkably raised, he generally sought the glory of God, and the good of the public; tho' he said upon a very solemn occasion, *I will walk in my house with a perfect heart*; and tho' he could, for the most part faithfully appeal to the great Searcher of hearts as to the uprightness of his intentions in this respect; yet he was well acquainted with the frailty of his nature, and the many snares and temptations that attend upon human greatness and power; and he could not therefore but own, at such a time of reflection as this, that in his public administration he had been too often betray'd into measures which were not to be justified. Tho' he had, for the most part, maintain'd a good degree of dependance on God in the day of danger, and ascribed to him the glory of his successes; yet he had sometimes sunk into unlawful fear in the season of distress, and in his prosperous circumstances he had too often known what it was to be elated with pride, and swell'd with ambition; and in that vanity of heart it was that he numbred the people. Notwithstanding he had learned that kings themselves shou'd moderate their expectations from the things
of

of sense, and restrain their appetites within the limits which are set to them by the laws of reason and religion; yet he had sometimes broken these bounds, and that with circumstances of a very flagrant and scandalous nature; of which we have a dreadful instance in the case of *Uriah*. Thus his *house* was not so with God, as it ought to have been, in this respect; nor was his government so constantly regulated by God's word, and so applied to the ends of his glory, as it should. He had said that his eyes shou'd be upon the faithful of the land, and they shou'd serve him; but that the worker of deceit shou'd not dwell in his house, nor the liar tarry in his sight; that he wou'd early destroy the wicked out of the land; and cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord. And tho' in a good measure he attended to these resolutions; yet alas! too many of his subordinate officers and deputies of power flatter'd him into the continuance of their irregularities, and the violation of his engagements to God and his people: truth and righteousness did not prevail in the nation, as much as might have been expected, nor was justice administered as duly as it ought to have been. And as *David's* reign, tho' good, was not free from blemishes, so his successes and honours were attended with many shades and disappointments, and not without some evident marks of the divine displeasure. But,

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2. OTHERS

Psalm ci.

OTHERS

10 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

2. OTHERS think that *David*, by his house, means his family.

HE had already met with severe affliction from some of his children, and had been abundantly convince'd, by sad experience, that grace does not descend *by blood, nor the will of man*. One of his sons had defiled his house with an incestuous violence on his sister; and another had engaged in a desperate rebellion against himself, attended with the most outrageous contempt both of the laws of God and nature: The divine judgments had been executed on the infant fruit of his criminal pleasures; *Ab-salom* had sheathed his avenging sword in the bowels of his brother *Amnon*; and the darling rebel had fallen, tho' righteously, yet scandalously, and, to his father's extream distress, in the midst of his wickedness. Nor had he perhaps any great prospect from those of his children that survived, except it were from *Solomon*: and the riches, honour, and power, with which he was going to be invested, *David* knew wou'd expose him to much danger. Neither had he any assurance how succeeding princes of his line wou'd behave. He had too much reason to fear that many of them would, as they really did, depart from the God whom he served, and the good rules of government which he followed; and in that case, he knew that both prince and people, instead of *springing up like the tender grass* under the refreshing influences of the *sun* and *rain*, would rather wither, and be cut off before the due time. But,

3. OTHERS

3. OTHERS again think, that *David* has a principal reference here to the condition, and frame of his own soul.

HIS faith was not perhaps in such a lively exercise as he desired. His hope had been often stagger'd, and his joys were many times clouded and depress'd; and he had not perhaps, at this time, those comfortable manifestations of the love of God which he long'd for, and had, on some former occasions, enjoy'd. His heart was *not so with God* as he could have wish'd, and his joys did not grow and flourish as his soul desired.

BUT I see no reason why all these interpretations should not be united together. And then the sense will run thus, and be as if *David* had said, "Notwithstanding all the iniquities and
" follies of my life and government, the sins
" of my family, and the marks of God's dis-
" pleasure upon it; and tho' my graces and my
" joys, as a believer, are at a low ebb; tho'
" old age is come upon me, and *satan* threatens
" me sore; tho' I am going down to the
" chambers of death, and am about to change
" my throne for a grave; and what may be
" the sins and sufferings of my posterity I
" know not; yet will I trust in the name
" of the Lord, for *he hath made with me an*
" *everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and*
" *sure.*" Which leads me,

II. To consider, the matter of *David's* support and comfort under these distressing cir-

12 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

cumstances; and that is derived from the *everlasting covenant*.

By the *covenant* here, I think it is very evident, when this text is compared with other passages of Scripture, that the royal prophet refers to that great transaction, before all time, between God the Father and his Son, the Lord *Jesus Christ*, his Lord, and the head and representative of the Church; a covenant that was often promulgated under the old testament, and was in a special manner exhibited to *Abraham*, and to *David*, of whose stock our Saviour was to come. And thus the apostle *Paul*, speaking to the *Jews* of the promises made to *David*, shews they were fulfilled in *raising unto Israel* this Saviour, *Jesus*; that *thro' him* they might obtain forgiveness of sins, and that *by him all that believe* should be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of *Moses*. And these, he says, are the *sure mercies of David*^a. This therefore was a covenant in which the concerns of *David's* own personal salvation, as well as of that of all the elect, were settled and secured; and likewise the continuation of the regal power in his family to the coming of the *Messiah*, who should also spring from his loins: the Lord having promised that he would *make him a house*, and that after his days were fulfilled, and he had *slept with his fathers*, he would *set up his seed after him*, which should *proceed out of his bowels*, and he would *establisb his kingdom for ever*^b: which must needs

^a Acts xiii. 23. — 39. ^b 2 Sam. vii. Pl. cxxxii. 11, 12.

needs refer to the spiritual kingdom over the true *Israelites*, which is now dispensed in a way of grace, and will finally issue in a kingdom of glory.

THIS *covenant* is *everlasting*, as it was not only stipulated from everlasting, but is to continue for ever. I need not mention the frequent failure of covenants between men, and that too often at the expence of all probity, and in the breach of the most solemn sanctions: some of an higher nature have been temporary, and are at an end; that with our first parents was violated on their part, and we feel the sad effects of it; but this is *everlasting*, and can never be broken or dissolved.

ETHAN celebrates this great affair, in the most solemn and elegant manner, in the 132d psalm; in which he represents *David's* personal interest in it, and considers him also both as a progenitor, and an eminent type of *Christ*. *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.—I have found David my servant: with my holy oil have I anointed him,—my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.—I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him: his seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;*

14 A SERMON at the Funeral

ments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips: Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah^c.

BUT again, as this covenant is everlasting, so it is ordered in all things, or ordered in all; for the word *things* is a supplement. It is ordered as to all the parties concerned, in every branch of the grand design, and in all the circumstances relating to it. It was originally disposed and settled by God's eternal purposes, and adjusted by his wise and gracious counsels; and every part of it being conducted by his powerful hand, the whole, will, in the fulness of time, be exactly compleated. However, in whole or in part, it may now seem irregular, and even contrary to the schemes of human wisdom, and the methods which would be thought proper by a finite understanding; yet all will appear in the end to be right, and all things will work together to bring about its glorious accomplishment.

AND then it is also sure. How great and astonishing soever the events are, which are promised, whatever opposition they meet with, and tho' they

^c Psal. lxxxix.

they often seem attended with appearances of uncertainty to the true believer himself; yet all these difficulties shall not *make the faith of God without effect*^d. For tho' we *believe not*, he is *faithful that has promised*^e, and he cannot deny himself^f: as he has order'd the covenant well in all things, so he has made it perfectly, and eternally sure.

THIS therefore was the support of David's faith and hope, in the midst of very trying dispensations; and it is as if he had said, "The government which Providence has put into my hands, may be weak, and weaken'd still more, and for a time may be under very evident decays; but yet it shall never be destroy'd: The Lord may *hide himself* for a season, and seem to *make void the covenant of his servant*, he may *prophane his crown*, *make his glory to cease*, and *cast his throne down to the ground*; he may *set up the right-hand of his adversaries*, and *make his enemies*, for a time, *to-rejoice*; but he will never forget his *former loving-kindnesses*, which he *swore unto David in his truth*^g; and the promised descent shall certainly be preserved. In other things my hopes may fail; but the *Messiah* shall come, whose kingdom shall know no end. Of this I have a confidence, built on an unfailing covenant, that *a rod shall come out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch*

^d Rom. iii. 3.

^e Heb. x. 23.

^f 2 Tim. ii. 13.

^g Psal. lxxix. 39, — 49.

16 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

“ *branch shall grow out of his roots* ^g. Tho’
 “ my own reign be but as a dead stock, and
 “ tho’ that should be the case of many of my
 “ descendants; yet God has established it by
 “ an unalterable covenant, that he *will raise*
 “ *this righteous Branch unto David, and he*
 “ *shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judg-*
 “ *ment and justice in the earth* ^h: *of the increase*
 “ *of his government and peace there shall be no*
 “ *end, to order his throne, and to establish it*
 “ *with judgment and with justice, from hence-*
 “ *forth, even for ever* ⁱ. Tho’ the hearts of
 “ believers in future generations may fail, be-
 “ cause of the seeming delay; yet, *in the fulness*
 “ *of time*, the promised Saviour will most cer-
 “ tainly come. Nay, tho’ the *house* of this
 “ Saviour itself, for a time, *be not so with God*;
 “ tho’ its first appearance be but as a small
 “ grain of mustard-seed, tho’ all the powers of
 “ the world combine against it, and tho’ at
 “ one time it be rent with seditions and cor-
 “ rupted with heresies, and at another it be
 “ tortured and scattered by persecutions; tho’
 “ Satan with all the powers of darkness inces-
 “ santly labour its destruction, and the hearts
 “ of the faithful subjects of this kingdom sink
 “ often into despondency, on account of these
 “ things; yet *no weapon formed against it shall*
 “ *prosper in the end, nor shall the gates of hell*
 “ *prevail* ^k. As to myself, I see the shadows
 “ of the evening are approaching, and I am
 going

^g Isa. xi. 1. ^h Jer. xxiii. 5. ⁱ Isa. ix. 7. ^k Mat. xvi. 18.

“going the way of all flesh; I am drawing
 “nigh to the valley of death; I may, I must
 “pass through it; but I am safe, as to what is
 “beyond the grave, and my eternal salvation
 “is secured; for *God has made with me an ever-
 “lasting covenant; ordered in all things, and
 “sure.*”

HERE this great and good man rests, and, with his last breath, declares that this was *all* his *salvation*. Herein were all the promises included, and all the *salvation* he expected for his country, and his posterity, for the church of God, and for his own soul: this made the *mercies of David sure*^k; and here was security enough.

To which he adds, *and this is all my desire*. The pronoun *my* is a supplement by the translators; and so the expression may be understood more extensively, as if he had said, “This is every thing that is, or can be truly and eternally desirable; this Saviour and this salvation is *the desire of all nations*^l, and “in a special manner *my desire*.” David now saw nothing in this changeable world worth desiring. In this salvation, as he elsewhere expresses it, God had given *him the desire of his heart*, and did not withhold the request of his lips, and in this he greatly rejoiced^m. In the exercise of faith on this provision he could cheerfully part with all temporal grandeur, and even life itself. And thus taking a believing view of the blessings of the *everlasting covenant*, and of his

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^k Isai. lv. 3.

^l Hag. ii. 7.

^m Psal. xxi. 1, 2.

18 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

own and the churches interest in them, he seems to have obtained the frame that good old *Simeon* was bless'd with long afterwards; when having this promis'd, and glorious descendant of *David* in his arms, he said, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel* ⁿ.

HAVING thus attempted to explain the words of the text, I shall endeavour to improve them a little further to your advantage, by considering two or three observations, which naturally arise from them; and the rather, because they are those, which your deceased pastor, with his dying lips, directed me to recommend to you, on this occasion, as the result of his own long and remarkable experience. And,

I. THE first is, that to our limited apprehensions, and weak faith, the ways of God, both in providence and grace, frequently appear very unaccountable.

WE know it was often thus with *David*, and it seems to have been so at this time; when, after he had received so many and such great promises, now in his dying moments, he found his house *not so with God, and that he made it not to grow*.

THAT there is a providence which governs all things, and by which the Author of

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ⁿ Luke ii. 29—32.

our beings *has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitations* °, is a truth that requires very little labour to confirm: it arises from the first principles of reason, is the constant observation of every man who considers with any proper attention, what passes round about him; and the evidence of divine revelation, with regard to the disposition and government of the kingdom of grace, is so strong in itself, and has been so abundantly confirm'd by the experience of good men in all ages of the church, that it can admit of no reasonable contradiction.

BUT the way of God in conducting both, is indeed *a great deep* P. *He doth great things past finding out, and wonders without number. He goeth by us, and we see him not, he passeth on also, and we perceive him not* q. Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection r?

IT puzzled the most sagacious enquirers among the sons of men long ago, when they observed, *that tho' the righteous, and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God: yet no man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before him. All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good so is the sinner, and he that*

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swear-

° Acts xvii. 24. 26.

P Psal. xxvi. 6.

q Job ix. 10, 11.

* Chap. xi. 7.

20 A SERMON at the Funeral

sweareth, as he that feareth an oath^s. Such are the mysteries of providence, and the hidden ways of the Ruler of all things.

BUT to be a little more particular. Who that reflects on the infinite purity of God, on his wisdom, and his power, and considers the special marks of his favour and honour bestowed on our nature at first, shall be able fully to account for that sinful and common ruin into which it was soon sunk ; which every one must own, the great and good God could have prevented ? And then, after all the care of providence to restore a lost world, and all the promises of grace given of old, how unaccountable did the almost universal devastation of the flood appear ? Or how very few of God's people could be reconciled, for four hundred years, to the dispositions of his providence, in the severe bondage to which the children of the promise were reduced, for that length of time ?

THAT there should be men found in the world who have trampled under foot the laws of reason and religion, abandoned themselves to every intemperate and lewd inclination, and committed the vilest outrages on the rights and liberties of mankind, men who have *set their mouths against heaven*, and triumphed in their atheism and blasphemy ; and yet, that such as these should often go on, not only with impunity, but with much outward success, and that some of them should subdue nations, and sacrifice millions to their lusts ; that *their eyes should stick*

^s Eccles. ix. 1, 2.

stick out with fatness, and their strength should be firm; that they should possess more than heart can wish; and that at last they should go down to their graves in peace, have no bands in their death, leave their acquisitions to their posterity, and that their names should be embalmed by succeeding generations^t. That these things should be, and that heaven should look on with silence: while, at the same time, those of whom the world is not worthy, should be expos'd to poverty, pain and persecution, should be destitute, afflicted, tormented^u; that they should be grievously harass'd by Satan; and that in the midst of their distresses, as to the supports they expect from religion, they should often walk in darkness and see no light, and at last breathe out their souls in sorrow and a doubting frame; and that their names should be forgotten, or given up to the obloquy and scorn of future ages. These are matters very hard to reconcile, and wonders which the Sovereign Disposer of all things can only fully account for.

THE most remarkable and astonishing afflictions of *Job*, to whose uprightness God himself gave such testimony, were not understood by the best men of his time, and brought his own faith to a very low ebb. Who could have thought that *Joseph* was the special favourite of heaven, when he was groaning in the pit, into which his brethren cast him; or when the iron entred into his soul in the Egyptian prison? And

^t Psal. lxxiii.

^u Heb. xi. 37, 38.

22 A SERMON at the Funeral

And what a strange providence was it, that *Moses* should be obliged to hide himself in exile for forty years, from the ungrateful resentments of the people he was appointed to deliver? or that the *man after God's own heart* should, in the greatest employments for his glory, and the good of the church, undergo such a series of afflictions, through almost the whole course of his life, as his history, and the many mournful songs he has left behind him abundantly testify?

BUT when we consider the astonishing method of our redemption, that the Son of God himself, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*^w, and in whom dwelleth *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*^x, that he should become incarnate, be subject to the most uncommon sorrows, and be acquainted with such grief, as no man besides himself ever felt; that he should be *made sin, who knew no sin*^y, be crucified by men, and mocked by devils; that the *Lord of Life* should become a victim to death, and the beloved of the Father be treated as his enemy; these are wonders, that *angels may well desire to look into*^z, but God himself only can account for. To which I may add the methods used by the Spirit, to spread and establish the gospel in the world: *not by might nor by power, by the wisdom of the wise, nor the understanding of the prudent; but by the foolish-*

^w Heb. i. 3. ^x Col. ii. 9. ^y 2 Cor. v. 21. ^z 1 Pet. i. 12.

foolishness of preaching; by the preaching of the cross^a; and this often too from the lips of the most unpromising instruments. And thus strange and unaccountable also are many of the methods of providence by which God brings sinners into an acquaintance with himself, and by which they are afterwards conducted, like Israel of old, to the city of habitations, through a wilderness that has no way.

BUT again, that some of the most eminent servants of *Christ* should be cut off in the midst of their usefulness; and that the capacities of others for the most important services should be taken from them, and their strength should be *weaken'd* in the midst of the way, and at a season when their abilities are come to their full maturity, and their hearts are warmed with the liveliest zeal, and resolution for public service: in a word, that when the work of good men seems to be over, and their lives are become a burthen to them, when they are groaning night and day for the *rest that remains for the people of God*, and desiring to *depart and be with Christ*; that the answer of their request should be delay'd, and that they should be continued many years in these mournful circumstances: these are things too difficult for us to unravel, and abundantly testify that the *way of the Lord*, as the Psalmist expresses it, *is in the sea, his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known^b*. But this leads me to observe,

II. THAT

^a 1 Cor. i. 18—25.

^b Psalm lxxvii. 19.

24 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

II. THAT tho' the divine proceedings, in providence and grace, are often very unaccountable, in our apprehensions, yet they are all right in themselves.

IN the midst of the great darkness that attends these things, reason in its clearest exercise, and true religion will always teach us to conclude, that the Being whose perfections are infinite, the great Creator and Disposer of the universe, *the Judge of all the earth*, must needs *do right*. Notwithstanding all the seeming appearances to the contrary, we must be reduced to the folly and blasphemy of denying all God's perfections, if we deny this. For if his government is not strictly just and equitable, can it possibly be consistent with true wisdom? will not, in this case, the divine power be rendered doubtful? or how shall we vindicate the holiness of God's nature, and the sacred truth of his promises? or conclude, with reason, that he is infinitely good? Thus if the righteousness of God's procedure be impeached in any thing, however dark his ways may appear to us, we shall be obliged to call in question all his other attributes, and then we shall be in a fair way to doubt even of his existence.

BUT the mysteries of providence and grace, when they are duly considered, are so far from furnishing out a just objection to either, that such a method of proceeding carries in it a dignity worthy of the great Governor of the world, and signatures of the most consummate wisdom.

wisdom, power, and goodness. Secrecy is what we find, in some sort, necessary, in order to carry on the business of magistracy here below: And surely then, reason rightly informed will oblige us to acknowledge, that it is the most wise, and suitable method to bring about the great purposes of God's glory, and the welfare of his church, and to overcome the continual opposition that is made to both. Things of so extensive a nature, and wherein there are such a variety of views, and yet all pursued with a subserviency to one grand design, must needs be intricate to us, who are incapable, however in this imperfect state, of surveying the whole scheme, or understanding the dependance of one circumstance on another, and the admirable connection and beauty of the whole. No—this discovery is reserved, as part of the pleasure, as well as honour of the state above: and then this seeming contrariety, even to the rules of wisdom and righteousness, will, to our everlasting astonishment, appear to carry in it the brightest evidences of both; and God will be eternally glorified, for causing *light* to spring out of *darkness*, and bringing about the designs of truth, and wisdom, and goodness too, out of methods which have seemed weak, absurd, and unkind, in the eyes of carnal prudence, and which have sometimes shock'd the faith of the strongest believer.

BUT, to leave the pride of infidels without excuse, and to support the weakest heart among the children of God, we are not without many discoveries, both in providence and grace,
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which,

26 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

which, in God's time, have vindicated the propriety, and goodness of some of his darkest dispensations.

THO' the fall of man was permitted; yet it was the effect of his sinful choice, who was in the enjoyment of a natural freedom; and the method of recovery, as it is explain'd in the gospel, satisfies the wise and serious, that the glory of God is infinitely more advanced in this, than it could have been in any other way; and awakens in them such sentiments of the divine perfections, as already enoble their natures, and often ravish their souls in such a manner, as to give them strong encouragement to hope for an advancement to a much higher, and more permanent state of happiness, than the original condition of human nature would admit of. Nor could our first parents, or their posterity, had they continued in their primitive rectitude, and happiness, have ever had their hearts warm'd with redeeming love, or their lips employ'd, either in the songs of *Moses* or the *Lamb*.

THE vengeance that swept away the old world, was a dreadful, but righteous testimony of God's displeasure against sin, and of his power to punish it; and at the same time, a most proper warning and example to all future generations. The preservation of one family secured the execution of God's gracious purposes, and the truth of his promises; and gave an illustrious instance of his power to save, as well as to destroy.

THE

THE people of *Israel*, when arrived in the land of promise, could in some measure see the wisdom, faithfulness, and goodness of God, even in his severest dispensations towards their ancestors, both in *Egypt* and the wilderness: and, by the help of the gospel, we are enabled to vindicate these proceedings more fully.

THE seeming inequality of providence in this life is indeed a great mystery; it has often tried the faith of the best of men, and when they have attempted to account for it, their *feet have well nigh slipp'd*; yet, they have been sometimes taught in the *sanctuary* the reasonableness of this procedure, or however to wait for the *day that shall declare it*; and have been able to conclude, that the loftiest situation in this life is often the most dangerous, and that wicked men are frequently set in those *slippery places*, that their fall may be the more remarkable and destructive, that they may be *brought into desolation, as in a moment, and be utterly consumed with terrors*^d: While, in their own afflicted circumstances, they have been taught, that the way of God is right; that the end he has in view is good, as well as just; that suitable support is provided; and that, as dispensations, even of the most distressing kind, when compared with the blessedness that shall follow, are but *light and momentary*; so they shall *work for them a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory*^e.

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God's

^d Psal. lxxiii. 17, 18, 19.

^e 2 Cor. iv. 17.

28 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

GOD's methods, tho' not fully understood, are in part cleared up here. *Joseph* lived to see a good deal of the meaning of his afflictions, and we can see much more. *Job's* case was a dark one indeed, for a season; but we *have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord*^f. These excellent men, as well as *Moses*, had corruptions which required mortification, and graces which wanted to be quickened: The school of affliction was needful to themselves, and they were to be eminent examples to others: Much good we know was hereby wrought in this world, and we shall know more of it hereafter; as well as of that eternal reward which attends on those, who by a *patient continuance in well-doing*, under such circumstances, *seek for glory, and immortality*^g.

THO' the mysteries of our redemption appear very unaccountable to a carnal mind, and a *crucified Saviour* is a *stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness*; yet faith doth in some measure discover, in this astonishing contrivance, both *the wisdom and the power of God*^h. The suggestions of *satan*, and *the cunning craft of them who lie in wait to deceive*, together with the remaining depravity of our own hearts, may throw difficulties in our way, and our faith may be often stagger'd about these things: but still, with great thankfulness we must acknowledge, that divine revelation has furnish'd us with

^f James v. 11.

^g Rom. ii. 7.

^h 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

with rational, and convincing evidences of the propriety of the method of our salvation, both respecting the *manifestation* of the Son of God *in the flesh*, and the several offices he has sustained in that character; together with the sovereign way God has taken to spread his gospel, and to bring his chosen people home to himself. And when our pursuits after a distinct satisfaction about the wisdom, and equity of these sublime matters are brought to a non-plus, is it not the most reasonable thing in the world, for us, in this state of weakness and trial, humbly to submit our faith to a revelation, which brings with it the fullest evidence of its divine authority? We are every day confounded and deceived in the conclusions we draw from the actions of our fellow-creatures, for want of a thorough knowledge of the springs from which they flow, and the ends they are designed to answer; and therefore, whatever obscurity may attend our conceptions here, with respect to the wisdom and equity of this great design, we ought to be thankful for what we have discovered, and to trust God for the clearer reconciliation of it to these principles, in that world, where human understanding shall receive its full illumination, and where the true rules of wisdom and righteousness shall be perfectly displayed.

BUT, to conclude this point. A christian can often, in this world, see much of the dignity and prudence of the Divine conduct, in disappointing the most promising expectations of the
best

30 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

best of men, when the honour of God has been injured, by the transferring their dependance from him to the creature. And they have been sometimes fully convinced of the propriety of the procedure on this account, when some of the most eminent instruments of public good have been removed in the midst of their days, in the greatest vigour of their abilities, and when they have seemed to be most wanted. Nor are we without instances, where satisfying reasons have been discovered, even in this imperfect state of things, why the afflicted soul of a poor believer, should be continued in a painful and a crazy tabernacle, for a great length of time, without any appearance of usefulness, and this, after many panting wishes, and ardent groans to be gone.

BUT notwithstanding the reasonableness of these; and other dispensations of providence, without number, be hidden from men; the humble believer will wait till the proper season of its manifestation shall come. And tho' carnal men stumble at these things, and fall; yet they would do well to consider, that the same vain, and absolute dependance on their own weak, and shallow apprehensions, and such a rash way of concluding about matters so much above human reach, will lead them into the greatest errors in their judgment and determination, even about the operations of nature, and things that are the proper objects of sense. But this leads me,

III. IN

III. IN the last place, to observe, that amidst all the difficulties that attend us, and tho' we often cannot account for God's dealings with ourselves and others; yet a steady dependance on *the everlasting covenant*, will always afford us a most reasonable, and sufficient support.

THIS you see bore up the heart of *David*, under the most trying circumstances of life, and at the article of death. And methinks, it should require no great labour to shew, the reasonableness of a believer's resting on such a security, and being satisfied with such a provision, at all events. The principal difficulty, indeed, is to make out our title to it. But if we can trace out the marks of a saving change in our hearts; if *old things are passed away, and all things are become new*ⁱ; if the bent of our dispositions has received the proper bias; if we have felt the humbling power of evangelical repentance, and have *renounced the hidden things of dishonesty*^k; if the remainders of corruption are the burden of our souls, and spiritual religion is our delight; if, having quitted all our dependance on our own righteousness, in point of justification before God, we have been able to place our whole confidence in the atonement, righteousness, and intercession of the great Mediator; if, in one word more, we find, in the midst of all our infirmities, that the work of sanctification is carried on in our hearts, and we can produce a sincere and uniform, tho' it be but an imperfect

ⁱ 2 Cor. v. 17. ^k Ch. iv. 2.

32 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

fect obedience, as the fruit of love to God, and the product of faith; if this be our happy case, why should we not read our names *written in the Lamb's book of life*¹? And why should we not then, be satisfied with the infinite provisions of this *covenant*; and, under the darkest providences, rest on that security, which the great God has condescended to give to all persons of this character, for the accomplishment of what he has promis'd. For,

I. LET us remember, that this is much more than could have been expected by worms and dust, the creatures of God's power, and the clay which came but yesterday out of the hands of the potter. A possibility of such blessedness, as is convey'd by the *covenant*, from a Being of such infinite dignity and perfection, and possess'd of such absolute rights of sovereignty, a probable intimation for hope to build upon, were favours we could certainly have no right to demand. Our first parents had indeed a *covenant* to trust to; but that was broken on their part, and ours; and we find ourselves involved in their rebellion, and with them righteously subjected to the curse annexed to it: All our nature is corrupted with the same seeds of sin, and we have imitated their iniquity a thousand, and a thousand times over; we have been obstinate to reproof, have stifled the checks of conscience, and *grieved the spirit of God*^m. And to which must be added, that we can

¹ Rev. xxi. 27.

^m Eph. iv. 30.

can have no sort of merit to produce; no power to deliver ourselves; no man *can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for himⁿ*; no angel has any righteousness to spare, any atonement to offer, or is able to save us out of the hands of almighty justice: for *the redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever^o*. What infinite goodness then is here! that the great God, whom we have thus offended, should, in these circumstances, condescend to give us, not only some faint prospect of deliverance; but, such a sure foundation of hope? And that tho' we still daily continue to offend him, and, for the honour of his holiness, as as well as for our own profit, we pass under frequent correction; yet we should have a *covenant of everlasting salvation* to depend upon? But,

2. LET us consider the nature of the blessings which are secured by this *covenant*: and it includes every thing that can make us truly, and eternally happy.

WE are not insured indeed of the riches and honours of this world, of established health of body, or a long continuance here. The covenant no where engages for our freedom from the temptations of *Satan*, or the cruelties of unreasonable men; not from the returns of unbelief, the workings of fear, the withdrawing of the consolations of the Spirit, and the light of God's countenance for a season, nor from the darkness of heart that must follow. No,—so

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far

ⁿ Psalm xlix. 7.

^o ver. 8.

34 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

far from this, that affliction and chastisement are included in the covenant^p. But then, it assures us also, of almighty aid to support us under all, and of that over-ruling influence, that shall make all these things issue in our advantage. The people of God may read bitter things against their state; they may mourn and fear, and go mourning and fearing all their days; but still they are *the Lord's portion, and the lot of his inheritance*^q; and therefore they must be preserved: every supply, that is proper to subserve the great design of their salvation, is provided for them in the covenant, and they shall be *kept by the power of God, thro' faith unto salvation*^r. *The gates of hell* may labour their destruction, and the powers of darkness may greatly distress them; but the tenor of the covenant forbids that they should finally *prevail*^s. Their condition here is a State of warfare, and they must fight, and may be sorely wounded, but they will certainly come off *more than conquerors*^t at last. *Thro' much tribulation* they must go on; but then it is *into the kingdom of God*^u: 'Tis thro' a dark valley they must pass at last, even thro' the *shadow of death*; but then it is into the possession of immortality, and eternal life. In a word, *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath provided for his people*^w, in this covenant: *durable riches,*

^p Psalm lxxxix. 32.

^q Deut. xxxii. 9.

^r 1 Pet. i. 5.

^s Matt. xvi. 18.

^t Rom. viii. 37.

^u Acts xiv. 22.

^w 1 Cor. ii. 9.

riches, crowns and thrones, and rivers of pleasure are theirs; but, let it be remember'd, that they are all spiritual, as well as eternal. Again,

3. SEE the characters this covenant bears.

1. IT is an *everlasting covenant*, a covenant of eternity^x. An eternal God has given it this title; it is his covenant; it was settled in eternity; and it will continue for ever. *The earth shall be removed away as a cottage^y, and the heavens be rolled together as a scroll, while their starry host shall fall down as the leaves of the vine^z; all the things of time shall come to an end, and time itself shall be no more^a; but the covenant of my peace, saith the Lord, shall never be removed; it is everlasting, and must continue, as long as God is true, and Christ is at his right hand.* And then,

2. IT is *order'd in all things*. It is settled by infinite wisdom and goodness, with regard to the parties contracting, the work of the Mediator, his atonement, and the persons who are to receive the advantages of it; with respect to *all things*, all the measures which were to be taken to procure, and to apply the blessings of it, on the one hand, and to receive them on the other. Every attending circumstance is *order'd* and settled, so as to be secure, and bring about this grand design. And what an astonishing work is here! All the operations of nature, the common actions of mankind, the devices of myriads of infernal spirits, and all the employ-

F 2

ments

^x ברית עולם

^a Rev. x. 6.

^y Isa. xxiv. 20.

^z Ch. xxxiv. 4.

36 A SERMON at the Funeral

ments of the hosts of heaven, are it seems so over-ruled, as to concur with the secret purposes of this covenant; which is also the constant concern of the great Mediator, and the care of the Spirit of God. Whatever seeming irregularities may attend it in our apprehensions, it will appear in the end to be well ordered in all things: and he that *numbers the hairs of our heads, and feeds the ravens when they cry*, will, undoubtedly, see that every minute circumstance of this great scheme be duly, and regularly executed.

3. It is *sure*, safely kept and preserved. The original word is taken from one that signifies *care, solicitude, and diligence, that nothing be lost, or fall to the ground*^b. The greater were the advantages promised in this covenant, the more unhappy would be the case of those who depend upon it, if they were insecure: but we have every assurance attending it, that may silence our fears in this respect. It has the solemn character of a *covenant*, to distinguish it from common transactions, and to set forth its superior excellency, and stability, to that of *works*; it is called the *new*^c, and the *better*^d covenant, and the *law of faith*^e. The parties contracting sufficiently secure it: the Father with all his power, grace, and veracity on the one hand; and on the other, not a meer man, tho'

^b שמר à שמר quod (*observante Mercero* ad Thesaur. Pagn.) curam, sollicitudinem & diligentiam connotat, ne quid omittatur, elabatur aut excutiat. ^c Jer. xxxi. 31. Heb. viii. 8. ^d ver. 6. ^e Rom. iii. 27.

tho' perfect, such an one did fall, and ruin us at first ; not an angel, for they have also fallen ; but the eternal Son of God ; he is our head and representative in this affair, the Mediator and surety of this *covenant*. It is *confirmed by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lye*, by the oath, as well as word of that God, who is often represented by the character of a God *keeping covenant*^f ; and as *he could swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself*^g. His engagements have been frequently, and on several occasions, repeated ; as, to our first parents, to *Abraham*, and the rest of the patriarchs, to *David*, to the Church of old by the prophets ; and still, more fully under the gospel, by *Christ* himself, and his apostles. The priesthood, and all the sacrificial rites of the law were to keep up the memorial of this *covenant* ; and, what is of infinitely more consequence, it is sealed by the blood of *Jesus*, which is very properly called the *blood of the everlasting covenant* : it is confirmed by his resurrection, and ascension ; by all the evidence of divine revelation, of prophecy, and miracles ; by the immortal seed of experimental religion, and the sanctifying and uniform influences of the spirit of God, on the hearts and lives of believers, in every generation. In a word, this *covenant* has, in its several parts, been gradually, and punctually fulfilling, from the beginning of time ; and what yet remains is therefore undoubtedly *jure*.

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^f Dan. ix. 4.

^g Heb. vi. 13, 18.

38 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

THUS you see what a safe foundation the believer has to depend upon. And what can he reasonably desire more? Faith indeed is necessary for the application of all; but this also is the *gift of God*^h; the promise of it is secured by this *covenant*; and, where it has its proper influence on our minds, it will produce the establish'd rest, and comfort which *David* enjoy'd, tho' his *house* was *not so with God* as he could have wished, and tho' *he made it not to grow*.

THE *foundation of God standeth sure*, having this impress upon it, and which can never be erased, *the Lord knoweth them that are his*ⁱ. So that under frowning providences, in dark and trembling frames, and even in dying moments, still the *everlasting covenant* stands fast. Here the believer's *salvation* is lodg'd and secured, and this is *all his salvation*: all he now enjoys of *salvation* flows from it, its absolute and eternal completion is necessary to his perfect *salvation*, nor doth he want, or expect any other *salvation*, than what is contained in it.

AND thus it is also *all his desire*: he will part with any thing, and every thing, rather than his interest in this *covenant*; and he has every thing needful in it. He *desires* to see it more fully, and to rest on it more firmly; his heart is set upon it, and it is the center of the hopes and wishes, and the confidence of his soul: it supports him when every thing besides
fails,

^h Eph. ii. 8.

ⁱ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

fails, and the full enjoyment of all that is contain'd in it, and secured by it, is the utmost stretch of his *desire*.

BUT I shall draw to a close, with some reflections on the whole. And,

I. How should these considerations silence the opposition, that is made by infidelity, to the admirable scheme of our salvation?

WHAT if the sovereign Governor of the world takes his providential way thro' clouds and darkness; if the measures of human wisdom, and carnal policy are nonplus'd, and confounded by the methods he uses? Yet the true dignity and wisdom, the power and goodness of the whole, are so far from being properly impeached hereby, that the evidence of these principles, as the rules of the divine procedure, are, to an humble and diligent observer, more abundantly confirm'd. And it is but reasonable to expect, that those who will venture to dispute the propriety of God's way of salvation, as it stands revealed in the scriptures, will shew us the method that human wisdom can contrive, which shall better advance the honour of the divine perfections, more happily promote the true welfare of the bodies and souls of men, the universal advantage of society, and prove a safer basis for the hope, and confidence of immortal souls to rest upon. Let them shew us, I say, by what measures the eternal honour of the divine Being, and the riches of his grace can be more illustriously display'd, and an human mind can be more suitably

40 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

suitably, and effectually comforted, and supported under the distresses to which sin has subjected it, than by this *everlasting covenant*.

2. WHAT has been said may, I hope, have a tendency to awaken poor careless sinners into some sense of their folly, and misery.

IF they will but give themselves leave to reflect a little seriously, one wou'd think they should soon see, that whatever affluence of outward things they enjoy, or whatever of this kind they entertain their minds with, in uncertain futurity; as they are strangers to true religion, and to this *covenant*, they are strangers to true happiness. What this world can afford is far from being able to satisfy the expectations of immortal minds, or from being suited to give them a rational support under the various distresses to which human nature is subject; it has no connexion with everlasting blessedness; and it is all held by a very uncertain tenure. All outward things, as not coming in the way of this *covenant*, will prove in the end curses, instead of blessings. And if men continue strangers to this spring of all spiritual good, what will they do when they come to change worlds? If there were any other way to heaven, such an one as this would never have been appointed: and the oath of God, the blood of his Son, and every other sanction that keeps this way open, has effectually shut up every other imaginable avenue to it? Nothing short of an interest in this *covenant* can surely be able to give a wise man true support in such an hour; and this will effectually

fectually do it, at all events. Whatever contempt men may cast on this blessed security now; yet they will find, when all other things fail them, that *David* acted a prudent part, when he placed *all his salvation*, and fixed *all his desire* here; and that nothing but an *eternal covenant* will do, when they come to approach an *eternal world*.

13. WE may from hence see the great reasonableness, of a christian's being reconciled to every temporary sorrow.

WHILE corruption remains, affliction must, and ought to continue. Sin in God's children requires the correction of their Father; and the chastisement they receive is, you see, an article of the *covenant* itself. God has no where promised them an uninterrupted enjoyment of outward things. This is *not their rest, because it is polluted*; it is a wilderness, not the land where their inheritance lies. Whatever of this world's good may conduce to their everlasting advantage is secured, and that is enough. Their Lord and Head, the Author of this great salvation, and the Mediator of this *covenant*, during his stay in this world, was a *man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*; and pass'd thro' the same valley, which they must pass thro', to the throne, which was secured to him by the same *covenant*; and it is establish'd for ever. They must *suffer with him*, but then they *shall reign with him* also. Neither should they repine at temporary afflictions, which, at the worst, are

42 *A SERMON at the Funeral*

but light and for a moment, when compared with the blessedness which this *covenant* secures; and when they consider also that they are properly intended, both to try their faith in this security, and to prepare their souls for this blessedness.

AND of the truth of this observation we have an eminent instance, in the reverend person, whose decease gave occasion to this discourse; and of whom, it will be now expected, that I should give some short account.

MR. *David Rees* was born in *Wales*, in the year 1683. As he had the advantage of descending from parents remarkable for their piety, and was consequently *trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*; so his early conversion to God, the quickness of his capacity, his industry, and desire to be useful, engaged his friends to encourage him in the pursuit of those studies, which are suited to the service of the sanctuary. And that they were not mistaken in their views in this respect, his remarkable proficiency, not in literature only, but in attainments of an higher and nobler kind, abundantly testified.

SOON after he appeared in public, his very promising abilities brought him up to this city, at the instances of some great and excellent men, with whom he afterwards maintained a very intimate, and happy friendship. He had been but a little while in *London*, before he received the unanimous call of this church, and was ordained your pastor. The public work of that day fell chiefly on my honoured Father,

ther, and the late reverend Mr. *John Piggott*. I was present on that occasion, and, tho' very young, I shall not easily forget the solemnities of it, nor the universal satisfaction and joy which appear'd in that numerous assembly.

HE was furnished with such talents, and he employ'd them in such a manner, as, with the divine blessing, proved greatly successful to the increase and edification of this society; and, by his occasional labours, to the profit of other churches.

HIS principles, as to church-order, and christian liberty were so well established, that he was unwavering in his contentment with all the self-denying circumstances which attend upon nonconformity, tho' his abilities and interest would have recommended him to the ease and plenty of another situation. And notwithstanding his charity was very extensive, yet such was the steadiness of his faith, with respect to the great doctrines of the gospel, and the principles of the reformation; that, at a season when the proper divinity of our Saviour, and other very important truths of the christian religion were deserted by some, and but very coolly defended by others, with whom he had maintained a long friendship, he honestly and bravely stood his ground, and publickly, and with great strength of argument, defended these principles; choosing rather to take his share of that contempt which has been so *charitably* poured out, of late years, on those who have had resolution enough to adhere to the good old do-

44 A SERMON at the Funeral

doctrines of revelation, than to lose the approbation of his own conscience, and the smiles of his Lord and Master *.

HIS natural and acquired abilities and his great skill in divinity, the province to which he devoted his life, together with his honest zeal for whatever appeared to him to be truth, and the solid and nervous manner in which he used to convey his sentiments, are so evident in his writings, and have given him such a reputation amongst wise and impartial judges, as will admit of no addition from any thing I can say.

I AM sure I may safely appeal to you of this church, as well as many more of this neighbourhood, as to the exemplary manner of his behaviour in his sacred office, in his family, and in

* What measures this excellent person took for the establishment of his mind at that time, and what judgment he formed of the opinions which were then advancing in the world, will best appear from his own words. Speaking of the opposition that was made to some very important truths, which are taught in the *Assembly's Catechism*. — "Having indulged," says he, "a calm reflection of mind, that I had earnestly recommended and inculcated to others, for a term of years, most of these doctrines, it raised in me a just resolution to reexamine them; and to try whether or no myself had been all this while mistaken, as well as unwarily had misled others: And upon a most impartial and serious review, I still apprehend the sentiments of the *Westminster Assembly* to be the most consonant to the holy scriptures, to experience, and the strictest observations I could make on the divine providence."

And having occasion a little after to mention the progress of the *new scheme*. "Not that I think," says he, "there is any thing properly new in it; for it is only a crude collection of heathenish notions, framed into a system of stupid and lifeless morality, and all this injuriously fathered on divine revelation, but comes very far short of the spirit, and vital power of christianity." See his *Intraduction to a free and sober enquiry into the truth of certain paragraphs, contained in the Assembly's shorter catechism*. Pag. 4, & 6.

in his friendships. And as the tender and generous treatment he met with, and always acknowledged, under his long and very grievous weakness, from almost all ranks of people in these parts, reflects great honour on their humanity; so it is no slender evidence of his excellent qualifications, and the integrity and prudence of his behaviour.

SUCH was the continuance of that painful disease, which at last wore out his strong constitution, and put an end to his valuable life, that I think it confined him for near sixteen years, almost wholly to his house, and the much greater part of that time to his bed. And, tho' he had naturally some asperity of temper, and I have heard him say, he had reason to believe, that hardly any man upon earth had gone thro' more pain than himself; yet I think few have ever observed him to repine. His patience indeed seemed to be almost inimitable; and his spirits were supported beyond any thing I ever saw. As long as he could be brought to this place, and be lifted into the pulpit, tho' it was attended with great fatigue, and extream pain, he would yet, for the most part, preach with his usual life and vigour. And when his strength would no longer admit of a removal from his bed, his friends, that visited him, know how his thoughts, and prayers were employed for the advantage of your souls; how he laboured after your former settlement, and how he rejoiced in it; and what a part he bore in your common sorrow, at the loss of that worthy and promising

46 A SERMON at the Funeral

sing youth^l, in whose *light* you *rejoyced* but for a very short season; and with what chearfulness he blessed God, and waited for his dissolution, when providence had lately, in so bountiful, and seasonable a manner provided for your souls.^m

ABOUT a month before his dissolution, he had a most lively and joyful season, in the comfortable views of his interest in *Christ*, and the glory to which he was going: and perhaps it was one of the most remarkable instances of impatience which he discovered during his long affliction; that when, a little after these sweet manifestations of God's presence were withdrawn from him, he express'd some strong emotions of sorrow and complaint, that he had not been waisted to the heavenly shore with that full and pleasant gale.

HIS long and very grievous confinement, in the midst of so much capacity, and of so much desire of usefulness, and in the midst of your wants, is one of those mysteries of providence, which is not easily unfolded. But however, thus much we know, that he was render'd hereby a most remarkable example of christian patience, and fortitude: and the continuation of his life, tho' under these circumstances of infirmity and sorrow, was yet the happy means of maintaining the peace, and directing the conduct of this community; if not of preserving it from dissolution: And to this I must add, that
it

^l The Reverend Mr. *William Coombes*.

^m In the Settlement of the Reverend Mr. *Aaron Spurrer*, as co-pastor with him.

it has made public trial of that christian, and benevolent temper amongst you, which is one of the best evidences of true religion; and so, has been the happy means of exhibiting a most commendable, and useful example to the churches of *Christ*, on your part; as afflicted ministers may find a most instructive one, on his.

THE use of his reason continued to the last; and when he perceived the near approaches of death, with great humility, love, and faithfulness, he resigned up his dear charge to the watchful care of his *colleague*; and that, with a tenderness which was very moving: and then he appointed a discourse to you, on this solemn occasion, from the experience of *David*, as containing the confession of his faith, and his dying counsel; in this full satisfaction, that tho' his *house was not so* as he could have wished, tho' his *strength was weakened in the way*, and tho' his afflictions had been most uncommon, tho' he could not do what he would for your souls, and tho' all that he did was mixed with weakness and imperfection, tho' his heart was not filled with that joy which he sometimes experienced, and tho' he had some fresh struggle with the adversary, and his departure was somewhat beclouded; yet here he could still rest and be comforted, and venture into the eternal world on this hope and confidence, that *God had made an everlasting covenant with him*; that it was *order'd in all things*, and that it was *sure*. And with this hope, and a smiling countenance, he enter'd into that rest, where all his pains and sighs are over.

THESE